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SOME

THOUGHTS

UPON

Dr. Sherlock's Vindication

OF THE

DOCTRIN of the HOLY TRINITY.

In a Letter.

SEeing you are pleaſed Sir, that I ſhould give you my thoughts about the Book lately ſet out by Dr. *Sherlock*, I am willing to comply with you therein, and to preſent you my mind with my ordinary Sincerity.

I obſerve firſt, that it's no hard matter for a witty man to frame a fine cloſe Syſteme altogether free from Contradiction or falſe reaſoning. Metaphyſicks do plentifully afford all ſorts of Contrivances; and let a man have never ſo little ſoundneſs of mind, yet it's an eaſie thing for him to write in ſuch a probable way as is fit to dazle the Reader: For *Plato*'s Philoſophy being fruitful of Ideas and Abſtractions, has been the firſt Womb out of which ſuch Methods have iſſued. The Sophiſms of *Ariſtotle* did prevail afterwards, and at laſt our Modern Divines have been of opinion, that *Carteſius*'s Subtilties afforded the fitteſt means of freeing themſelves from all the Incumbrances of their Myſtery. So true it is, that the ſenſe Men have of Religion, depends in a great meaſure upon the Genius of the Philoſophical Sect which they embrac'd. Our Author has taken this laſt courſe, and I confeſs, his Scheme appear'd to me prettily contriv'd: But then it's not enough to frame a cloſe, but an ungrounded Syſtem. Divines are bound to lay a foundation in Revelation; there it was therefore that I expected the Doctor, and there it is that I have fully diſcovered his weakneſs.

The two places of Scripture which he brings in (*page* 51.) to prove the eſſential Unity of Father and Son are theſe, *I and the Father are one, and the Father is in me, and I am in him*, Joh. 10. 30, 38. He aſſures us, that Chriſt ſpoke them

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in a ſenſe of *Unity of Eſſence and Nature*; and he pretends, that the Jews took 'em in that very ſenſe, as he expreſſeth it, p. 165. *The Jews underſtood him to mean, that he was the Son of God by Nature, and charged him with Blaſphemy for making himſelf God.* And p. 240. *Chriſt declared, I and my Father are one, which the Jews underſtood (and they did not miſtake him in it) was to make himſelf God.* But how comes it that the Doctor has not perceiv'd that between thoſe two paſſages which he cites, which are not at a great diſtance from one another; there is a third which invalidates all his Proofs, and overthrows the curious Philoſophical Structure, which he pretends to build up? I mean the 35, and 36 verſes of the ſame Chapter, ſet down preciſely between thoſe two Citations, where Chriſt moſt exactly explains to the *Jews*, in what ſenſe he had advanc'd, that he was one with his Father, or which is all one, after what manner he was God. *If he called them Gods, unto whom the Word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken; ſay ye of him whom the Father hath ſanctified and ſent into the World; Thou blaſphemeſt, becauſe I ſaid, I am the Son of God*; which plainly ſhews, that when he ſaid he was the Son of God, his meaning was, that he was ſo only in a ſenſe of Conſecration and of Miſſion, and conſequently, that his Unity with the Father, is not an eſſential and natural Unity, as the Author pretends, but a meer moral and relative Unity, which conſiſts in the Equality of Works, not of Eſſence, which is abſolutely incommunicable. God imparts his Holineſs to the faithful, whom he makes thereby *partakers of his Divine Nature*. He has imparted to Prophets and Kings his Authority, Knowledge and Power, as Chriſt ſays here: Why can't he then impart to his *Meſſias*, the *King of Kings*, and the *Prince of Prophets*, all his Virtues, and all his Glory, in a more intimate Manner, and in a more eminent Degree, *without meaſure*, (as the Scripture has it, *John* 3. 34.) and as much as a man is capable of receiving from the Liberality and Almightineſs of him, by whom he is ſanctified and exalted? Different degrees make no alteration in the nature and poſſibility of a Thing.

Thus the Divinity of Chriſt is the ſame, not in degree, but in kind with the Divinity of other Gods, whom God has ſanctified, that is to ſay, an imparted or communicated Divinity; ſeeing they and Chriſt are ſuch, becauſe the ſupream God has ſanctified and ſent them into the World, that is, furniſh'd them with Ability and Authority to act in his Name publickly among men. Chriſt therefore explained himſelf moſt clearly, ſhewing to the Jews the Ground and Foundation of his Divinity. In effect, the only thing he was to prove againſt them, was, that he had not made himſelf equal to God in a blaſphemous ſenſe, by uſurping any thing from God, belonging to his Eſſence or Attributes; but acknowldged, that he had his Divinity only from the Liberality and Unction of him who is the ſource of it; ſo that he was not the Son of God by a Communication of Eſſence, but of Gifts. The Compariſon which he makes of himſelf with other Meſſengers of God, does not hinder him from being ſuch in a more excellent degree than the other, whom the Scripture dignifies with that Title. On the contrary it does ſuppoſe it, as if he had ſaid, *How much more am I ſuch, I, I ſay, who am the greateſt and the nobleſt of the Lord's anointed Ones, if it be true that I am the* Meſſias, *as I do prove my ſelf to be by the Works which I do in the name of my Father which ſent me.* But at the ſame time this Compariſon plainly ſhews, that he calls himſelf God, or Son of God, upon the ſame grounds that the others are ſtyled Gods by the Scripture, to wit, becauſe the Father has ſanctified him.

I come now more particularly to the matter in hand. The Author ſays, that thoſe

those Words, *I and the Father are one*, are to be understood *of an Unity of Essence and Nature*; that Christ spoke them in that sense, and that the Jews put such an Interpretation upon them; yet all the Divines that are on his side, when they are to explain this place, *say ye that I blaspheme*, &c. say, that the Jews stood in no need of being taught all what he was, but that it was sufficient for them to know, that he was the Son of God, in a manner authorized by their Law. Therefore I argue thus, If there was no need for the Jews to know, that Christ was the Son of God by Nature, why did he immediately before declare, that he and the Father are one by an Unity of Nature? Why did he teach that fundamental Truth, that he is of the same Essence with the Father, supreme God as the Father? Was it not that they might understand what he taught them? And when they had understood him, why does he draw them off from that understanding, by bringing in a sense of Unction and Sanctification, instead of a sense of Nature, that is to say, a Socinian sense instead of an Orthodox? If they took his Words in a sense of *Nature*, does he not undeceive them by neatly substituting another, which is as remote from it, as Earth is from Heaven? Or rather, does he not deceive by leaping from one thing to another, by running into equivocal terms to avoid their fury, by telling 'em that this term of *Son of God* which he had at first insinuated in a sense of Nature, may admit of another sense less capable of exasperating them, *viz.* a figurative sense, to wit, of Consecration? Because Christ's hour was not yet come, as *Trinitarians* speak, or that it was not time to reveal that great Mystery; was it better to overthrow a good sense, and the right Impression caused by the first Words, than to be stoned? As if Christ had no other means of escaping from the Jews, than to prevaricate by disowning a capital Truth, which he had advanc'd, and had been rightly understood. He who came to lay down his life to bear witness to the Truth, shall he act against his Father's Intent and the Duties of his Designation, by preserving his Life at the cost of Truth?

I know that our divine Saviour delivers his Doctrin in profound Wisdom, having regard to the Circumstances of Place, Time and Persons. However, there is a vast difference between the delivering of a Doctrin in a prudent and wise course, and the disowning of a Truth when it has been once deliver'd; or (which cometh to the same) the destroying of a true and genuine Impression, made by some words suitable to the intent of him that speaks, to put into its room a new sense, which neither the Hearer nor the Teacher had at first thought of. The Orthodox (as they call themselves) can no ways escape, if Christ made use of this latter Reason, taken from his Sanctification, to avoid the fury of the Jews; he has at the same time given away the former taken from the eternal Generation, which had so exasperated them against him; or else it had been to no purpose, if teaching the latter which did appease them, he had been willing they should have believ'd the former which did exasperate 'em. Thus it stands, as if he had said, *why do ye stone me?* I did not mean that I was the *Son of God* by Nature, as you do fancy, but only by Sanctification and by Unction, which is no way contrary to your Law, nor Blasphemy, as the former would be. Is it not as if he had said, that he was the *Son of God* only in such a sense as is not Blasphemy, according to their Law; that is, that he is such only in a sense exclusive to all other that should make him liable to stoning?

I should think this passage, written with the very finger of Truth, to be unanswerable, were it not that I know the Orthodox were wont to darken the most bright light contrary to sincerity and good sense; and to swallow all sorts of Contradictions and Absurdities, casting dust in

the eyes of ſimple men. Now any one may ſee, that I might argue againſt the ſecond Proof made uſe of by the Author, as I have done againſt the firſt; the paſſage I am explaining affording me the ſame Reaſons againſt either of them, ſeeing it ſtands between 'em, and caſts its light both upon the foregoing, and the following Verſes; but the intelligent Reader may do it himſelf, with the help of our Obſervations. *Calvin*'s ſolid and penetrating Wit, did ſo well perceive the ſtrength of theſe Reflections, that he aſſerts, * that the Fathers had erroniouſly made uſe of theſe words againſt the *Arians*; *I and the Father are one*, ſo far was he from ſpying therein an Unity of Eſſence. I have prov'd that the Dr. does alſo uſe them courſely, and conſequently the other paſſages which he alledges for the Confirmation of this, viz. that *the Word was with God*; *that it was in the boſom of the Father*, &c. ought to be explained with reſpect to this expreſs Declaration of the Saviour of the World himſelf; ſo that if he ſaid, he was the *Son of God*, it is becauſe the Father had ſanctified and ſent him into the World, as other Perſons alſo are called Gods, to whom the divine Word or Commiſſion has come, but in a far different Proportion. Therefore I would have the Author to know, that ſince this paſſage contains in a moſt clear and exact way, the true foundation upon which is grounded the Title of *Son of God*, which Chriſt aſcribes to himſelf, I may lawfully make uſe of it to explain any other paſſage wherein Chriſt is ſtyled *God*, or *Son of God*, unleſs he can prove that ſuch a ſenſe cannot be applied to them without a Contradiction, or bring another Reaſon upon which the Title of *Son of God* is alſo expreſly grounded; as for example, the eternal Generation. But ſo it is, all the paſſages of the Goſpel which contain a Reaſon, why Chriſt is called the *Son of God*, and wherein the very term of Generation is made uſe of, are of the ſame nature with this, containing only reaſons of the ſame kind; for they are all taken from the Oeconomy and Miniſtry of Chriſt; ſome from his Conception by the Holy Ghoſt, the other from his Reſurrection and Exaltation, but none at all from his eternal Generation.

* *See his Comment upon the place.*

The Title of *Son of God* is in Scripture grounded upon theſe five things; two that are taken from his twofold Birth, the one, out of the *Womb of the Virgin*, by the Operation of the Holy Ghoſt, *Luke* 1. 35. the other out of the *Womb of the Earth*, by vertue of his Reſurrection; which makes him undoubtedly the natural *Son of God*, his *only begotten Son*, his *proper*, or *own Son*. Three other which are drawn from his Offices; the firſt, becauſe he is that Prophet whom the Father has ſanctified, and ſent into the World with an extraordinary Commiſſion, and an Unction without meaſure; for the Holy Ghoſt deſcended upon him, and there came a Voice from Heaven, ſaying, *This is my beloved Son*, &c. *Mat.* 3. laſt. The ſecond, becauſe he is the great High Prieſt, immediately called to that Office by God himſelf, who ſaid unto him, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*, Heb. 5. 5. And the third, becauſe he is the King whom God has exalted to a ſupream power, both in Heaven and Earth, directing to him the ſame Speech, *Thou art my Son*, &c. *Heb.* 1. 5. which makes him the Son of God by way of Excellence, or Præ-eminence above all the other Prophets, Prieſts and Kings. The Scripture does expreſly afford us all theſe grounds of Chriſt's Divinity, and in the very places wherein the Holy Ghoſt intends to let us know, why *God* dignifies *Chriſt* with the name and Title of his Son. They are not meer inſignificant Words, but Expoſitions and Comments upon the other places, the ſenſe of which is not ſo clear and obvious. They are ſuch Reaſons as fill up the Idea of the Terms, wherein Chriſt is called the *only begotten Son of God*, his *beloved Son*, and his *own Son*. If there be any other which

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ascribe to him the same honor in a sense of eternal Generation, and say that he is such, because the Father has begotten him from all Eternity of his own substance, let them produce 'em and shew, 1. That such a Generation is therein expressly contained, 2. That it is the Basis of that glorious Title of *God*, or *Son of God* bestow'd upon Christ. Till therefore the Author brings a new reason of another kind, taken from the eternal generation, upon which as upon a solid Foundation the Title of Son of God is clearly grounded, and with as much evidence, as it is upon the places above mentioned; till then I say, I may lawfully determine the sense of those naked and simple expressions controverted amongst us, by the sense of those passages, wherein our question is determined. What indeed, is this Conception, this Sanctification, this Resurrection, this Heavenly Instalment and Exaltation, which made him to be the Son of God? Is all this an eternal Generation? Shall we understad by *to Day* Eternity, and not this very time, this day of his second Birth and of his Coronation?

Let us endeavour to make this Author sensible of this difficulty, which perhaps he has perceived already. The question now controverted amongst us, *viz.* in what sense Christ is God, was formerly agitated in his presence. The Jews his adversaries asserted, as our Orthodox do, that he had made himself God by nature, and the Dr. assures us that they mistook not Christ's meaning: However it does plainly appear, that Christ refutes this accusation; that he clears himself of the Blasphemy, wherewith the Jews and the Dr. charge him, and plainly asserts that he told them he was the Son of God in a like sense only as others sent by God are, whom the Scripture dignifies with the Title of Gods. Here is the controversy determined in behalf of the Drs. Adversaries. Here consequently the Jews are convinced of being Calumniators, and the Dr. of being mistaken as well as they. Indeed Christ shuns to style himself God, though it follows from his reasoning that he has Right to such a Title. He is contented to style himself the Son of God. And hereupon I think is grounded *Lactantius*'s observation, wherein speaking of Christ he saith, *Nunquam seipsum Deum dixit, quia non servasset fidem, si missus, ut Deos tolleret, et unum assereret, induceret alium præter unum.* 'He never styl'd himself 'God, because he should not have perform'ed his trust, if being sent to take a'way Gods, and to assert that there is but 'one, he should have introduced another 'besides one.

But this is not all, the *Unitarians* or *Socinians* do not only rely upon clear passages, wherein their conclusions are plainly contain'd, but upon the Analogy, I mean the Primitive Facts and Doctrins set down in the Creed of the Apostles, which ought to fix by their own evidence the sense of those remote Doctrins, where Truth is not so obvious nor so often repeated. Those Primitive Facts shew forth that unalterable Faith, which is lyable neither to dispute nor change, and is styled by *Tertullian* Regula fidei immobilis et irreformabilis, *an immoveable and unalterable rule of Faith*, and by *Vincentius's Lirinensis* Quod Semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus creditum est. *That which has been believed in all times, every where, and by all Men.* Take away those unvariable Objects, there remains nothing but uncertainty and confusion: Moral things being capable of receiving infinite different interpretations, and both humane and divine Speech being susceptible of a Thousand possible and probable Senses, unless Reason and the Primitive Objects of Revelation restrain them to a fixt Sense, whereby our Ideas may be determined to some undeniable matter, that no rational

onal diſpute can overthrow. Thoſe Primitive Facts are the Birth, the Life, the Death and the Reſurrection of Chriſt, whereby we are taught that Chriſt was a Man like unto us in all things, Sin only excepted, which facts are an unmoveable Foundation, according to which we ought to examin Revelations, and not by Metaphyſical Diſtinctions of Eſſence, Perſons and Natures, but by reaſons of Diſpenſation and Government, which teach us that he who was a Man like unto us, has had, through his Obedience, the ſupreme Dignity of the Son of God confer'd upon him; God having made him Lord and Chriſt, yea, God *Illum fecit Deum*, ſaith St. *Ambroſe de fide ad Gratian.* Not as the Author is pleaſed to ſay, that God has only declar'd thereby that he was his Son by an Eternal Generation. The Scripture can admit of no ſuch ſenſe, when it ſays, that *Chriſt was determined the Son of God in power —— by the Reſurrection from the dead.* See *Gr.* and *Eng. marg.* And more expreſly yet, when it do's affirm, that upon the account of his Sufferings, *God has highly exalted him and given him a name above every name.*

The ſenſe which the Author puts upon it would deprive Chriſt of all the Glory of his Vertue and his Obedience; whereas the ſenſe of the Scripture conſiſts in aſcribing to his ſufferings the ground and foundation of his glorious exaltation. Now after ſo particulariz'd a Hiſtory of the Birth, Life, Death and Reſurrection of the *Meſſias*, after ſo conſtant and well known Facts, who would think that ſome expreſſions by the by, ſhould have made us miſtake him, who is the Subject of this Hiſtory for the ſupreme God? We have in this imitated the Jews, who finding it a hard task to conciliate the ſufferings of the *Meſſias* with the Glory aſcribed to him by the Prophets, have contrived two *Miſſias's*, one the Son of *David*, a glorious Conqueror; the other the Son of *Joſeph*, afflicted and miſerable; Thus we being not willing to conciliate Chriſt's humiliation with his high exaltation, had rather fancy two natures, or rather two Perſons in Chriſt, than to admit of a ſenſe delivered by the Sacred Scripture it ſelf, which calls them Gods, whom God exalts to a ſupreme dignity; eſpecially when ſuch an exaltation is immediately confer'd; we chooſe rather to renounce common ſenſe and reaſon, and to fly to incomprehenſible Metaphyſics, than to interpret expreſſions relating to Government according to Primitive Truths, and Hiſtorical Terms; which are the main of the Goſpel, and ought to fix the ſenſe of all the reſt.

Shall my Faith depend upon *Plato's* Ideas, *Ariſtotle's* Subtilties, *Carteſius's* ſelf and mutual Conſciouſneſs, and metaphyſical Abſtractions, more unintelligible to poor mortal Men than the Tongue of Angels? Alas! If the School-men who teach me to ſay in my familiar Catechiſm, that there are three Perſons in one numerical Eſſence, had been willing to teach me on the contrary, that there are three Eſſences in one numerical Perſon, I could have liked this later as well as the former, and ſhould cry *Myſtery*, and devoutly admire what I could not underſtand. Again, Shall my Faith be the Whirlwind of all the niceties of Grammar, and of a raſh Criticiſm, that has nothing of certainty in it ſelf? No, No! My Faith has no other Foundation but thoſe unvariable Truths, which are inſpired by the Holy Ghoſt, and offer themſelves to the eyes of any that can but read, without reaſoning, and criticiſm, and in all ſorts of verſions, or thoſe undeniable Facts, which the ſacred Writers have ſeen and heard, and are not tied to the Method uſed by thoſe that relate them. The Holy Ghoſt has affected neither Hebraiſm nor Greciſm, neither improper nor figurative-

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Speech, but the expreſſions have depended upon the choice of the Writers, and internal circumſtances, *viz.* the native Country, Genius, Education, Studies, *&c.* of the Penman: Or External, as Time, Place, Perſons with whom they diſcourſe, *&c.* All theſe are lyable to variations, but the main things and the Body of eſſential Doctrins is lyable to no ſuch variety. Hence it is that the Ancients, who were wiſer than we, made up their Creed either only of undeniable Facts, of God the Creator, and of the *Meſſias*, Born, Dead and Riſen, *&c.* or of primitive and unalterable Doctrins, of Remiſſion of Sins, of the Reſurrection of the Body, *&c.* Compare with this Chriſtian Simplicity, our Confeſſions of Faith, encreas'd to an infinite Bulk; and the Philoſophical and Cabaliſtical Creed of *Athanaſius*, which may ſerve the turn of a full Dictionary for Theological Gibberiſh. Read the Creed of the Apoſtles; every thing therein is agreeable to the Goſpel, and breaths the ſimplicity which is in Chriſt. Read the Creed of the pretended *Athanaſius*; the Liturgy of the Church of *England* allows them to ſing it, if you have any mind to it. The Catholick Faith (ſays he) is this, That we Worſhip one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; neither confounding the Perſons, nor dividing the Subſtance. And ſo he goes on in the ſame Tune, in a train of Burdens, which indeed might be look'd upon as a Song, with greater reaſon than that of the Nicene Creed *God of God, Light of Light*, which *Calvin* calls *Cantilenam*, a little Song. They are Myſtical Songs for devout Trinitarians. Good Lord! Is it poſſible that Chriſtians ſhould not be aſham'd of ſuch ſtrange Galemafrey, and that ſo ſtrange a Compoſition ſhould be look'd upon at this time oth' day as the foundation of Chriſtianity.

But ſuch Terms (ſay they) are made uſe of to fix the ſenſe of Scripture, and to diſtinguiſh Hereticks. Very well! But with ſuch Arms a Papiſt will be able to defend the moſt monſtrous Opinions. Do but diſtingniſh two natures in the Perſon of Chriſt, he will alſo diſtinguiſh two manners of Being in Chriſt's Body; a Sacramental Being, and a Natural Being; and with ſuch a diſtinction as with an impenitrable Shield he will repel all the Darts ſhot againſt him. It is an eaſie thing to defend an abſurd Opinion, with a more abſurd diſtinction. What will not error do when it gets ſuch a Licenſe? Certainly, as Metaphyſicks are but raſh reaſonings, which go beyoud the limits preſcrib'd by God to the Objects of reaſon; ſo the Confeſſions of Faith which are puffed up with Metaphyſical Terms, are nothing elſe but a debaucht Faith, which lanches beyoud the juſt limits which God has ſet to its Objects. All the Myſteries which are ſpoken of in ſo ſplendid a way, are of this nature; they are the wandrings of an unruly and over-curious fancy, which launches out from the foundation of Religion contain'd in the primitive objects of the Goſpel, to ſearch in every word of the Revelation, ſuch ſecrets as God never put there; finding every where cunning myſteries, as if Religion did conſiſt in Cabals and Subtilties. You'll ſay it is an incomprehenſible myſtery to our finite minds; you ſay ſo indeed, ſo will a Papiſt ſay of his pretended myſtery, and they will both of them have me to ſubmit my Faith and my Reaſon. But its ridiculous to require of me that I ſhould ſubmit ſuch things as I am ſure of, to a Revelation which is controverted. Do but yield the *ſelf* and *mutual* conciouſneſs of the Doctor to a Papiſt, and the ſhift of myſteries, it will be no hard matter for him to prove that a Million of Bodies are but one Body. With the help of ſuch a method a Pagan will eaſily clear himſelf of the charge of Idolatry. *Jupiter*, *Pluto*, and *Neptune* will be three by

by ſelf-conſciouſneſs, and will be but one by mutual conſciouſneſs. *Minerva, Venus, &c.* will be nothing elſe but the virtues of that ſupreme and infinite God: The one will be his Wiſdom, the other his Love, *&c.* By this maxim of the Author p. 189. that what are faculties in us, are Perſons in God. So that what he ſaid about Socinianiſm p. 252. will be found more ſuitable to his Orthodoxy, that it juſtifies Polytheiſm and excuſes both Pagan and Popiſh Idolatries.

The Socinians are accus'd of Subtilty, this appears to me very ſtrange. All the extravagances of the Orthodox are accounted ſacred myſteries; but Socinians do no ſooner reduce all things to common ſenſe and the primitive Doctrins of the Goſpel, but its looked upon as ſubtilty, violent aud unatural explications. To inſiſt upon the Creed of the Apoſtles, wherein are contain'd the firſt Facts, and ſuch Facts as are not above the reach of any Man, is accounted ſubtilty. What will then become of thoſe refined Metaphyſicks, Eſſence, Nature, Perſons, Modes, Conſubſtantialities, Hypoſtaſes, Self and Mutual Conſciouſneſs; and of that Learning conſiſting in meer Words, whereof the vulgar has no Idea, and which the Drs. themſelves utter without underſtanding them. His queſtiuncnlis (ſaith *Eraſmus* in his Notes upon the firſt Chap. of the 1 Ep. to *Tim.*) ‘ Ætas rerum omnium fugaciſſima con-
‘ teritur, cum pleraq; ſint ejus generis ut
‘ doctius neſciantur quam ſciantur, ut ri-
‘ dicule quærantur, temere definiantur.
‘ Breve tempus eſt, & arduum eſt ne-
‘ gotium agere vere Chriſtianum ——os
‘ conſecratum eſt Evangelio, & nihil
‘ crepat niſi Averroem & Arriſtotelem
‘ (*add to it*) et Carteſium.] ——Neq; mi-
‘ nus peccant qui nobis objiciunt fumos
‘ Cabaliſticos & Talmudicos.

In theſe little queſtions our age of all things the moſt fleeting is conſumed, when as moſt of 'em are of that kind, that its more Learning to be Ignorant of 'em than to know 'em, that they are ridiculouſly enquired into and raſhly defined. The time is ſhort and its a difficult matter to be truly Chriſtian——our Mouth is conſecrated to the Goſpel and we crake nothing but Averroes and Ariſtotle (*I may add alſo* Carteſius) *——neither are they leſs faulty who preſent us with Cabaliſtick and Talmudick Smoak. Grotius* in his ſixth Book *De veritate Relig. Chriſti*, ſpeaking of *Conſtantine's* Age and thoſe that follow'd after ſays ‘ Sicut olim
‘ arbori vitæ prælata arbor ſcientiæ max-
‘ ima dederat mala, ita tunc quoq; curioſa
‘ Eruditio pietati antehabita & ex reli-
‘ gione ars facta. Cui deinde conſequens
‘ fuerit, ut ad exemplum eorum qui
‘ turrim Babilonicam ædificabant, affecta-
‘ tio temeraria rerum ſublimium, diſſonas
‘ locutiones & diſcordiam pareret; qui-
‘ bus plebs conſpectis, ſæpe neſcia quo
‘ ſe verteret, culpam in ſacras literas re-
‘ jecit, eaſq; tamquam venenatas cæpit
‘ fugere. Religio autem paſſim non in
‘ mentis puritate, ſed——in ſtudio fla-
‘ grante ſemel electarum partium col-
‘ locari coepit, tandemq; evenit ut multi
‘ ſint Chriſtiani nomine, re pauciſſimi.
‘ As of old the Tree of Knowledge pre-
‘ fer'd before the Tree of Life, brought
‘ *upon us* the greateſt evils, ſo then alſo
‘ curious Learning eſteem'd more than
‘ Piety and Religion being made an art
‘ *did the ſame.* For the conſequence of
‘ that was, that after the example of
‘ thoſe that built the Tower of *Babel*,
‘ a raſh affectation of ſublime things
‘ brought forth differing ſpeeches and
‘ diſcord; which the common People be-
‘ holding, and not knowing which way
‘ to turn themſelves, laid the fault upon
‘ the Holy Scriptures, and began to avoid
‘ them as pernicious; and Religion e-
‘ very where began to be placed not in
‘ the Purity of the Mind, but——in flam-
‘ ing zeal for the Parties they had once
‘ choſen; ſo at length it came to paſs there
‘ were many Chriſtians in name, but in
‘ reality very few.

I

I know very well why they Fancy the *Socinians* to be ſubtle Men; it is becauſe they fight againſt that vain Learning, which has been introduced into the moſt popular Catechiſms, and unto which moſt Men are inured. They fight againſt Prejudices, a corrupt and dark Tradition, an inveterate Cuſtom of Judging of all things by Humane Authority, which are the only Principles whereby we underſtand *Scr.* ſince the time the God of this World has blinded our Underſtandings with the Smoak of a Cabaliſtical Talmud, a Crude Scolaſtic Doctrine, and an arrogant and uncertain Criticiſm. The dirty Spring which has afforded this falſe Learning is the *Gnoſticiſm*, which boaſted of great Myſteries, but of no holy Practices. They were the firſt Heretics who made Perfection to conſiſt in high Knowledge, and have heaped up Trinity upon Trinity. *Vid. Concil. Bracar* 1. *art.* 2. This is the Sect which prevails at this time in Chriſtendom: this is the Antichriſt mentioned by St. *John*, who denies that Jeſus who came in Fleſh [a ſuffering and crucified Man] is the Chriſt. This is he who being aſhamed of the low Eſtate and Sufferings of Chriſt, which the *Jews* reproach unto us, think to ſhun theſe Reproaches, by making him the Supreme God. To ſay he is God otherwiſe than by the Unction and Inauguration of his Father, who made him Lord and Chriſt, and even God by giving him a Name which is above every Name, is to be Antichriſt. This is to deſtroy his Unction, to take away from him his real Title of Chriſt to beſtow upon him an imaginary one. He has been made God by the hand of the Father, who crown'd his Virtue and his Obedience with that excellent and glorious Name: and they will have him to be imaginarily ſuch by the hands of Men, by a Title which is not the reward of his Sufferings. If it has been lawful for the *Homoouſians* to fancy a Chriſt or a Son of God, who did exiſt before him who was born of the Virgin *Mary*, without thinking of contradicting the Articles of the Creed, *I believe in Jeſus Chriſt the only begotten Son of God, who was conceived by the Holy Ghoſt, born of the Virgin* Mary, *&c.* and ſits after his Sufferings at the right Hand of God his Father (which is the moſt excellent way whereby a Man may be called the Son of God:) why ſhan't the *Papiſts* be allow'd to contrive a Chriſt 1600 years after him, that was born of a Virgin, who is born of a Morſel of Bread, conceived and formed by the words of a Prieſt without any deſign of contradicting the ſame Article? Indeed it is an eaſier thing to make a Chr. of a Morſel of Bread, than the Supreme God of a Man. If the one diſtinguiſhes the Natures, the other will diſtinguiſh the manner of exiſting; both of 'em will make uſe of Metaphyſics, and by the help of ſuch Theological Inſtruments, each one will free himſelf from Difficulties, and it ſhall not be known which of them gets the better. In effect, each one will avoid the moſt preſſing Arguments, by contriving a Diſtinction more abſurd than the very Opinion which he maintains, one Abſurdity helping another; or by finding out a new ſenſe of the Authority brought againſt him. One may eaſily ſee how convenient the Machin of probable Senſes is, which our Divines bring into their Diſputes, what an eaſie thing is it for them to free themſelves from preſſing Difficulties, and make new Overtures with thoſe famous Keys 'of Tranſpoſition of Words or Clauſes, Errors of Copies, various Readings, various 'Meanings of the ſame Word, Punctuation, 'taking away or adding of the Negative Particle, Alluſion to Cuſtoms, Conſideration of 'the Matter in hand, Exageration, Interrogation Parentheſis, literal Senſe, figurative 'Senſe, want of exactneſs in the Sacred Writers, Prudence in concealing ſome things, 'or in complying with ſome Opinions prevailing in their Times, Condeſcenſion to Pagans 'or *Jews*, uſing ſuch Idea's as prevailed in 'ſuch a Religion, Prejudication of the Hearers, 'Anſwers ſuitable to their Need rather than to 'their Queries, Compendious Expreſſions, 'Phraſeology of that time, the Nation and 'the Author's Native Country, Parallel Paſſages, Precepts peculiar to the Apoſtles, 'Councils of Perfection, Cenſures againſt certain Heretics, the Circumſtances of the Subject, the Scope of the Author, what goes 'before and what follows, the barrenneſs of 'the Hebrew-Tongue, and conſequently its

' Ambiguity, its ſtranger Idioms, the various ' Senſes of the ſame Verb, indifferent Conju- ' gations, the want of certain ways of Expreſ- ' ſion uſed in other Tongues, the Sublime and ' Metaphorical Expreſſions moſt frequent in ' the Oriental Languages, the Imitation of the ' Hebrew Idiom in the 70 Verſion, and in ' the Original Text of the New Teſtament, ' Greek of the 'Synagogue, and ſuch like Keys ' of Solution, very fit to eterniſe Diſputes. I do not deny but ſuch means may be fit to find out the Truth, but it's only when controverted Truths are thereby brought to the primitive and undeniable Truths; that is to ſay, when care is taken that every thing be referred to the Analogy of Faith, to the Rule of Faith contained in the Creed of the univerſal Church: then it is very proper to make uſe of them. Whereas it is a Source of Error, to uſe them in Relation to a Syſtem, and to the particular Opinion of the Party wherein one finds himſelf ingaged, which every one calls the Analogy of Faith; and yet it is nothing elſe but that particular Tradition, which we will not allow in the Church of *Rome*. So that the *Socinians* only, who refer every thing to the Primitive Truths, and to undeniable Facts may make uſe of thoſe Keys of Solution. Becauſe having light on this firſt Foundation whereon to fix their foot, they muſt needs make a good Uſe of their Criticiſm, having, I ſay, this Primitive Truth on their ſide, That there is but one God Creator of Heaven and Earth, and at the ſame time a Circumſtantiated Hiſtory of the Birth, Death and Reſurrection of Chriſt, which, as all do confeſs, is an undeniable Proof, that he was a Man.

Theſe two Principles being once acknowledged by rational Men, who have a diſtinct Idea of the Nature of theſe two Beings, God and Man, they muſt of neceſſity fix upon this Ground the Senſe of all other Truths, which ſeem to contradict this avowed Truth, and expound them in a Senſe of Morality and of Oeconomy, not in an Abſtract and Metaphyſical Senſe of Nature, Perſon, Eſſence, Hypoſtaſis, Generation, Proceſſion, Relation, numerical and ſpecifical Unity, and ſuch like, which every one admires, crying, Myſtery! Myſtery! but no Man underſtands. This is a Privilege which we make uſe of againſt the *Papiſts*; whilſt they bring to no purpoſe the Letter, *This is my body*, *My fleſh is meat indeed*, &c. They run themſelves to no purpoſe into long Criticiſms about the Words *Body* and *Fleſh*. They wander notwithſtanding their long Reaſonings, and make an Ill Uſe of thoſe means fit to find out a true Interpretation; becauſe we ſhow that there is againſt them, this undeniable Fact, that Chriſt took Bread, gave Bread; and this primitive and unmoveable Truth, that Chriſt aſcended into Heaven. Thus it ſtands with the *Doctor*, and the *Socinians*: they will ſhew him that he can make no uſe, either of the Letter of Scripture, or the means of Solution allowed in a lawful Diſpute, without wandering moſt pitifully; becauſe there ſtands in his way this Primitive Truth, That *there is but one God*, and this Fact acknowledged by all, That *Chriſt was conceived by the Holy Ghoſt, and Born of the Virgin* Mary. He can by no means make uſe of ſuch Methods, if he departs never ſo little from thoſe firſt Foundations of the Chriſtian Religion; but in referring every thing thereunto, he may: Otherwiſe he muſt fly to Metaphyſics; but after all pretences, the Metaphyſical Senſe is unknown to Scripture. All the Knowledge which the Scripture affords us concerning God is meerly Moral and Relative to us, but no ways Metaphyſical; for in that reſpect God being Incomprehenſible, he cannot be revealed. So that whatever we know concerning the Divine Perfections is Moral, and has a Relation to us, *viz.* that his Power has Created us; that his Goodneſs is communicated to us, as unto his Creatures; that his Juſtice inflicts Puniſhment upon the Guilty and protects the Innocent, that his Mercy forgives them that Repent, eſpecially through Chriſt under the Goſpel; that the ſame Power that gives us Life and preſerves it, will be able to reſtore it again, when we have loſt it in his Service; that his Wiſdom knows how to conduct all ſorts of means in order to the Salvation of thoſe that love him, *&c.*

For Example, I have a clear and diſtinct Idea, that nothing can eſcape his Hands, that nothing can ſteal out of his Sight. This Idea is ſufficient to ſettle my Faith in reſpect to his Omniſcience and his Omnipreſence. But to know

know vvhether there be an Immensity of Essence or of Opperation, these are Metaphysics out of my reach, and are no helps to the setling of my Confidence and Trust in him. Therefore it is, that Revelation does not speak precisely about this. Thus it is with the Unity of God. I have but a moral, natural or civil Idea of this Unity, as much as one is opposite to many; and thereby I understand an Idea, vvhich is the same among all Men, to whom the Commandment of Worshipping one God has been delivered. The Lawgiver having given no Laws that ought to be taken in a Metaphysical Sense, which depends upon a heated Imagination, and varies according to the Humors, the Condition, the Climate, the Sect of Philosophy, and the Prejudications of Men. According to the Style of Laws, vvhich is commonly simple and easie, by *God* vve understand a Divine and Supreme Person, one numerical Being and Spirit, having the same Notion of that Unity, vvhich we have of an Angel, a Man, a King, *&c.* The *Jews* being used to the Notion of the Word *God*: if Christ and his Apostles had changed it, vvithout vvarning them of it, by taking this Word in a Sense unknown to the *Jewish* Notion, understanding in a Metaphysical vvay by God, *Three Beings* and *Three Minds*, as the *Doctor* doth; they should have imposed upon them by such an Equivocation, vvhich all of a sudden changes the natural Idea, vvhich the Law afforded them of the Unity of God, into a Metaphysical Idea, whereby *Aristotle* himself might have been deceived: that Change being of such a Nature, that there is no Law, though never so plain and so positive, but its Force and Authority might be thereby eluded.

But say they, the Scripture speaks of Christ as if he vvere the Supreme God, ascribing to him his Names, his Work and his Perfections. I answer, that God in his Revelations supposes that vve have some common Notions, vvhich are derived either from Nature: or from a general Tradition, whereby we come to a Distinct Idea of God, and of his Creatures, as much as vve are concerned therein in order to a Civil or Religious Life. We know in that respect vvhat is a Spirit, a Body, one and many. This being supposed, the Scripture sometimes runs it self into figurative Expressions, vvhich it would undoubtedly avoid vvere it not that it supposes us to have sufficient knowledge to rectifie them, and bring them to a Rational Sense, suitably to the nature of the things in question. So that vve cannot stumble at the Letter of those Expressions, but by making an Ill Use of our Senses, Reason and Conscience. Therefore God will have us to be attentive to his Word, and to examine it vvith a sincere Heart, and a discerning Mind, free from Prejudices. Thus the Scripture does not stick to attribute unto God Hands, Eyes, Entrals, and a thousand such things as vvould induce us to believe that he is Corporeal, did vve not know either by the Idea vvhich vve have of the most perfect Being, or by some other plain and simple Expressions of Revelation, that God is a Spirit. For of two Expressions of Scripture, vve are obliged to take in a Literal Sense, that which suits best our natural knowledge, and to look upon as figurative, that vvhich is contrary to those Notions, being understood in a Literal Sense. Thus the Scripture calls the Eucharistical Bread the the Body of Christ, the Magistrates, the Angels and the Messias *God*; because it supposes that we may easily put a good Sense upon those Denominations by some clear Passages of the Revelation; vvhich teach us that Christ's Body is in Heaven, that God is one, that the Messias is a Man like unto us; that upon the account of his Obedience God has raised him to a Divine Authority; so giving us the Reason and Ground of that Denomination, vvhich is taken not from his Nature, but from his Obedience and his Offices. Thus by the Knowledge by vvhich he endowed us at our Creation, he makes us capible of Knowing and of Worshipping him, vvhereby vve judge distinctly vvhat is Bread, what a Humane Body, a God, a Man, *&c.* This Natural Revelation continuing still, and being the Foundation of all other. When God said to the *Israelites*, *The Lord thy God is one Lord, and him only shalt thou serve:*

If thereby God meant One in Eſſence, and Three in Perſons, his Laws ſhould be more obſcure than the Oracles of the Falſe Gods. The Style of the Laws (as I ſaid already) is ſimple, natural and popular: and they call One God, *One*, in the ſame Senſe as we commonly ſay, an Angel, a Man: for there is a certain Language common to all Mankind, and certain Notions known to all Nations, which are like a Foundation to the Expreſſions of the Goſpel, of the Law, and of all ſorts of Revelation. What is then to be done with Men, who are ſo fooliſh as to make of all Abſurdities ſo many Myſteries? Of a Man, a Supreme God? Of a bit of Bread the Body of Chriſt, being not willing to make uſe of their Senſes, Reaſon and Primitive Faith, *I believe in God*, &c. Such Men are incurable, for God has afforded no Remedy for their Cure. *Pervicaciæ nullum remedium poſuit Deus: God has appointed no remedy for wilful Obſtinacy.*

It ought to be confeſt, Sir, that it would be a very eaſie thing to find out in Scripture the whole Will of God, as much as concerns us, would we but Read it with Humility and Reſpect, helped with our common Knowledge, free from Prejudices, and laying aſide that Learning falſly ſo called: would we, as I ſay, Read it as we Read the Proclamations of our Kings, regarding only their Will, without philoſophiſing or criticiſing upon the Words contained in them: being perſuaded as God ſpake as we commonly ſpeak; and that whatever Hebraiſm or Greciſm there is in his Word, yet he has caſt over it a certain Univerſal Intelligence, common to all Nations that are endowed with Speech, and grounded upon the common Notices of our Senſes and Reaſon; which is preſently perceived by any rational and unprejudiced Man, though he have no Skill either in Greek or in Latin. Take away Prejudices, and give way to common Senſe and Reaſon, which God does always ſuppoſe in all his Revelations; and then what can be for Inſtance more eaſily refuted, than the monſtrous Opinion of Tranſubſtantiation, which makes up the capital Belief of the Church of *Rome*. When I give way to my Senſes in an ordinary Courſe, without preventing them by the falſe Conceptions of my Mind. If any Body tells me by ſhewing the King's Picture, *Here's the King*, mine Eyes ſee it is the King's Picture which they ſhew me; mine Ears are determined by mine Eyes to the true meaning of thoſe Words. So that *Here is the King*, will never produce in my mind the Idea of the very Perſon of the King originally and really preſent. Thus in a Senſe of Religion and of Morality, when I hear Chriſt ſay, *This is my body*, ſhewing me the Sacrament and Memorial of his Body, and at the very ſame time that mine Ears hear theſe Words, *This is my body*, mine Eyes ſee it is the Image of Chriſts Body, which he offers me in a holy and conſecrated Bread, to celebrate the Memory of his Death; and mine Eyes teſtifie to me that this Bread remains Bread ſtill, even after the Divine Conſecration, then undoubtedly mine Ears determined by mine Eyes to the true Senſe of the words, *This is my body*, will in no wiſe produce in my mind the Idea of a corporal and natural Body of Chriſt. But they will ſay, Faith ought to produce it, ſeeing Chriſt ſaid ſo. I anſwer, I can have no Faith but muſt be grounded, either upon my Senſes, or the ſight of Miracle, or the hearing of the Word of God: Now there is no Miracle here, ſeeing mine Eyes diſcover to me no miraculous change of the Bread into the Body of Chriſt. On the contrary, they ſee Bread ſtill, but a Miracle conſiſts in ſhewing me, that that which was before true and proper Bread is become now a true and proper Humane Body; or elſe it is a Miracle without a Miracle, a Myſtery without a Myſtery. Neither is there any hearing of the Word of God, ſeeing the hearing of thoſe words, *This is my body*, when their Senſe is indeterminate, is not yet the hearing of the Word of God, but only when their Senſe is fixed and determinate; and it is ſuch only, when mine Eyes cauſe me to reflect that I have ſome words concerning Bread: then the hearing of thoſe Words, *This is my body*, (whereby could be meant the real Body of Chriſt, if mine Eyes ſaw his true Body offered to me,) do now produce in my mind only the Idea of the figure

gure of his Body. becauſe mine Eyes do ſee that thoſe words are only ſpoken of a Sacramental Bread, as thoſe Words, *This is the King*, (whereby could be meant the Perſon of the King, if I ſaw they were ſpoken of the King himſelf,) are determined by mine Eyes to mean only the picture of the King, becauſe I behold they are ſpoken of a Picture.

Thus in like manner theſe Words of Chriſt, *Deſtroy this temple*, might be meant of the Temple of *Jeruſalem*, as the *Jews* maliciouſly interpreted them, if Chriſt had ſhewed the Temple with his Finger in ſpeaking thoſe words; and ones Ears ſhould be neceſſarily determined by ones Eyes to ſuch a Senſe. But if Chriſt ſpeaking thoſe words touched his own Body with his Finger, one could underſtand by his words nothing elſe but the Temple of his Body, ſeeing our Ears would be determined by our Eyes to ſuch a figurative Meaning. All they that have no regard to this natural Rule of Language, are falſe Witneſſes againſt Truth, as the *Jews* were againſt Chriſt.

Let us apply this Obſervation to the matter in hand; when *Thomas* ſays, *My Lord and my God*: in theſe words the term *God* muſtbe taken in a Senſe determined by the Eyes and the Hands of that Apoſtle, who had then thruſt his Hand into the Side of our Saviour; whereby I am taught that he ſpeaks of a Man raiſed from the dead, and therefore made *God* by the power of his Reſurrection. *Theodorus of Mopſuetia* puts another ſenſe upon theſe words, obſerving however the ſame Rule: thus he ſaith in his Commentary upon St. *John*; *Thomas quidem cum ſic credidiſſet, Dominus meus & Deus meus dixit non ipſum Dominum & Deum dicens, (non enim Reſurrectionis ſcientia docebat & Deum eſſe qui reſurrexit,) ſed quaſi pro miraculoſo facto Deum collaudat.* 'Thomas having thus believed, ſaid, My Lord 'and my God, not ſaying that the Lord 'Chriſt was God, (for the knowledge of the 'Reſurrection, did not teach him that he 'who was raiſed was God) but he praiſeth 'God as it were for a miraculous Work. Indeed it's very true, that a Fact which I ſee, and a thing which I touch, ought to prevail over a word in Order to the Determination of thoſe words, *My Lord and my God*. Thus when Chriſt ſays, Before *Abraham* was I am: This Expreſſion might induce me to believe, that Chriſt means a natural manner of Being, were it not that mine Ears are determined by mine Eyes to excite in my mind the Idea of quite another Exiſtence, ſince he who ſpeaks thus, is not yet fifty years old, as the *Jews* obſerved. Thus the *Jews* might have perceived, had they been willing to hear him patiently, and for their Inſtruction: but they ſeek to oppoſe him, and tell him, *Thou haſt ſeen Abraham*, which indeed ſhould be underſtood of a corporeal and natural ſight; whereas he had ſaid, that *Abraham* had ſeen him, or rather *his day*; which could only mean a moral and ſpiritual view. His meaning was, that he was before *Abraham* in the ſame manner as *Abraham* had ſeen him, *viz.* in the Divine Promiſe, he being the promiſed and deſtinated Meſſias. For Faith is a Demonſtration and View of things that are not ſeen, but are preſent by Promiſe. Upon this account the *Jews* who waited for a Pretence, make as if they did not underſtand him, and take up Stones to caſt at him: a true Image (to ſay ſo by the way) of all Perſecutors, (who put a wrong Senſe upon the beſt things) and of ſtarcht Bigots, who underſtand every thing amiſs, and teſtifie againſt the Truth: and that is ſufficient to make one be purſued, condemned and burnt. I could go on, Sir, in ſuch a way, through the Explication of other controverted Paſſages, eſpecially of the firſt of *John*: but I hear that the Doctor is about a ſecond Volume, intending to refute the *Socinians* by more Scripture, and in a more direct way than he has done, therefore I expect him, and will not prevent him.

As for Tradition, I do declare before hand, that if it can be proved that the Church has been Catholic in Charity as well as in Faith, I admit heartily of ſuch a Tradition. The Perſecuting Orthodox, who will have every one think what they themſelves think, ſhould be aſhamed to ſay that the Church in all Ages, and the Oecunomical Councils held the ſame Belief, and condemned the contrary. I will

not

not insist upon the falshood of this Assertion, which has been acknowledged by several learned Men; but I answer in a word, That when every one shall enjoy the liberty of Examining and Speaking what he thinks, without endangering his Reputation, his Estate, his Imployments, his Tranquility, and his Life; then I will confess, that this prejudication about Multitude may be well grounded. But since such a liberty has never been allow'd, and the Secular Arm, the Inquisition, the Croisado's, and the Penal Laws, have endeavoured to settle and conserve the Faith, as far as we are acquainted with it by the Histories of past Ages, and of our own; I am so far from being moved by such an Argument, that I am inspir'd with a just Indignation against those who dare to use it. Faith and Tradition have thus been forc'd upon Men, and they are so at this day, not only by violence, but by a constrained and unnatural jurisdiction: For they insert into Catechisms and Liturgies, some Metaphysical scraps to express certain Opinions, which excite such Ideas, as no rational Man would ever come at by reading the Scripture. For the natural Impression, made by the Apostles Creed, offereth not to Wise, if they be also plain Men, the Sense of the Comments which are at this Day added to it by forc'd Instruction: But such an Instruction, though Strange and Unnatural, becomes so natural by long use, that the most simple Explications of the word of God, are presently accounted new and unnatural, when they depart never so little from that unlucky Prejudice. Oh, strange blindness! Men ought not to call such an Explication unnatural, as does not stick to the Letter in its strict Sense, the Letter being capable of a Figurative Sense, or of any other that is not so obvious: But they ought to style so an Explication, which has no regard to the Circumstances of the Text, the nature of the Matter in hand, the Genius and Spirit of the Revelation, the Primitive and Undeniable Doctrines, and what is certain in the Facts mentioned in Scripture, and in the Principles of natural Notions. So long as Protestants will not follow so sure, and infallible Guides, they will continue divided from one another by means of a Thousand Disputes, which keep at a distance several honest Men, and lay them open to their Adversaries the Papists.

All the Explications of Scripture made use of by the several Sects of Protestants, who look at it as the rule of their Faith; *Lutherians*, *Calvinists*, *Socinians*, &c. make at most but probable Sences, until they use those Keys of Solution above mentioned, in relation to the first Truths of holy Scripture. For the probable Senses are not sufficient to settle our Faith, we want a certain and undeniable Sense; we challenge the Doctor to afford us any such, but by Explaining the Scripture, either by the help of an Infallible Tradition, if he has any such, or in respect to the Primitive and Unmoveable Doctrines. Now according to this last Method, the Divinity of Christ is not so much as probable, in a Sense of Nature, whereas the Sense of Unction and Office is altogether necessary. The way therefore to determine our Quarrels is, By reducing all things to some certain Foundations, upon which we may rely in Examining the rest. Simple Christians may stick to those Primitive Objects, which are the only necessary things, and Divines may make use of them as a most Infallible rule of Faith to seek upon that Ground for all the other less necessary, and remote Truths. The necessity of this Maxim does appear by the uncertainty, and encumbrance of all our Disputes, especially of this, wherein it's an easy thing to shew, that according to this way of Arguing, by the sole Letter of the Scripture, and the wandering and metaphysical Reasoning, which sets at naught the most certain Principles of our natural Light, under pretence of Mystery; according to this Method, I say, may be proved (in as plausible a way as the Trinity is proved) the most absurd and extravagant Belief of the Corporeal Presence.

Now, Sir, for the right Understanding of my way of Reasoning in this Dispute, you will be pleased to remember what I told you more than once, That I have no share in those Factions, which most pitifully tear in pieces Christianity; that I am neither a *Papist* nor

nor a *Lutheran*, nor a *Calviniſt*, nor a *Socinian*, &c. I am a Chriſtian (God be thank'd.) I ſide only with the Truth, and take ſhelter in the Boſom of that Catholick Church, which ſtands Independently upon any thing that goes under the name of a Party. I mean, that I don't give up my Faith to thoſe particular Confeſſions of Faith, which every Sect endeavours to enlarge to an infinite bulk: I reſolve my Syſtim into the Creed of the Univerſal Church, which by reaſon of its Antiquity, but eſpecially of the Authority of its Doctrines, is rightly call'd the Apoſtles Creed, admitted of all Chriſtians, notwithſtanding their implacable Hatreds and Diviſions. The Learned Dr. *Meggot*, in a Sermon, Preached before the King and Queen on *Rom.* 12. 3. believes that ſuch a Faith is ſufficient, in order to Salvation, ſo it be accompanied with a good and holy Life. "All the *Credenda*, "ſaith he, that the Antient Church required "of them ſhe admitted to her Communion, "for ſome Ages, was only an acknowledge-"ment of the Articles of the Creed we call "the Apoſtles, and preſt no more on them; "and though all Churches ſince have added "others, ſome more, ſome leſs, it appears "by their not judging one another, about "Receiving or not Receiving them, this is "not ſo much from any Opinion they have "of the abſolute neceſſity of holding thoſe "Articles, as of the abſolute neceſſity of "preſerving Peace among their own Mem-"bers, who were like to make Diſturbance "about them: And again, Our Contentions, "ſaith he, are not about the great vital "Truths of Chriſtianity, whereunto we have "all attain'd but ſome additional Notions, "which if they ſhould be true, our Con-"ſciences tell us, Men may be ſaved though "they don't believe: Thus far the Doctor. In effect, one may Diſpute about thoſe additional Notions, *Salva fide qua Chriſtiani ſumus*, as St. *Auſtin* ſaith. I ſhould tranſcribe the Doctors whole Sermon, if I would ſet down all that he ſays in behalf of this Principle. I am a Proteſtant upon ſuch an account, and heartily embrace the Communion of the Church of *England*, independently on any Faction whatſoever. Chriſt, as ſent by his Father, his Promiſes, and his Precepts, make up the whole of the Goſpel; for this is Life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt whom thou haſt ſent. This Abridgement of the Chriſtian Faith contains the whole Myſtery of Salvation, and all the main Truths, without which I could not obey the Precepts, nor hope for the Rewards.

The Antient and Modern *Donatiſts*, who monopolize Salvation, encluding it in their ſole Party, are for that very reaſon *Hereticks*, *Schiſmaticks*, and excluded out of the Catholick Church. It's to no purpoſe that the Doctor ſay we too much Sacrifice to our Reaſon, becauſe we will have no ſuch Myſteries, as go under ſo fine a Title, no otherwiſe than as they are full of Abſurdities. Let him ſay himſelf if it be not to build ones Religion (I will not ſay upon Reaſon, but) upon the Fancy and Wanderings of Mens Mind, when we make it depend upon our weak Reaſonings, and uncertain Conſequences. As for us we acknowledge no other Foundation of Faith, than the Primitive Facts and Truths of the Goſpel, which are of ſuch an evidence and certainty, as no rational Man can deny: Whereas the Orthodox, who ſwell Religion and Confeſſions of Faith, have no other prop of their Faith, and conſequently of their Salvation, than human Reaſonings, diſtracted Metaphyſicks, and bold Criticiſms; means that have not been able, ever ſince they were put in practice, to fix the Senſe of one ſingle Paſſage. On the contrary, they have hitherto bereav'd us of well received and undoubted Senſes: we muſt therefore take Scripture for the only rule of our Faith, and admit its Primitive Truths with clear and diſtinct Belief; but as to the Truths leſs neceſſary, implicit Faith is ſufficient: That is to ſay, That they are received with ſuch diſpoſition of Mind and Heart, as fits us to believe them explicitly as they appear clearly, and we are plainly convinc'd that they are Scripture Truths.

This being laid down, Sir, it's no hard matter to reſolve two Difficulties, the Solution whereof will however appear to you a Paradox. The firſt is, that the *Papiſts*, who have choſen a wrong Principle, do not-

notwithstanding agree in the Tradition of their Church: Whereas the Protestants, who have a right one, do notwithstanding disagree about the sense of Scripture. I answer, That both of them being true Heretics, who have levelled their Confessions of Faith with an infinite number of Opinions, either useless, or strange, or odious to Religion, and having thereupon laid hold on two different Principles, to defend them. Those have had the good luck of chusing a false Principle, whereon there Heresies are founded, and consequently a Principle which clears, confirms, and reconciles them, because it is contrived on purpose to be the Rule of their Errors. But these the Ill Fortune of chusing a true Principle, wherein their Heresies cannot be found, and therefore a Principle which condemns, confounds and divides them, because it was not made to be the Rule of their new Doctrines.

The second Difficulty which gives a great deal of trouble to several Men, is, that there are many Deists, though Deists, lead a stricter Life than most of those who boast so much of Christianity. I answer, That it may very well be, and this is my Reason: Those Deists spoken of are mostly well-natured Men, and would not be Deists, were they well taught the Christian Religion. So far are Divines from laying open her Beauty to their Eyes, that they keep them back from her by the ugly pictures they draw of her. Those Men are entertained with absurd Mysteries, passages of Scripture wrested, wherein every one finds his Account, I mean a Sense that favors his party. These things are a stumbling Block to Men of Probity and Understanding. In effect, they are sincere honest-hearted Men, who do good by impulse of their natural Religion, Honesty and good Conscience, which have great Influence upon them. And no question but they would give glory to the Truth of the Gospel, did it shine unto them in its native Evidence and Simplicity. But it's certain, that Religion as it is now a days beheld, affrights such as are in the nearest Disposition to Christianity; and whose minds seem not fitted to imbrace the Absurdities of an extravagant Religion. On the contrary, it draws into its Bosom all Worldly-minded Men, who are always in a readiness to submit their Faith to the most monstrous Mysteries, provided they might not incur the loss of their Favourite, and cherish'd Passions. Let their Lusts be but indulged, they will willingly Sacrifice common Sense, Reason, and Faith. Thus Religion has been well suited to worldly Mens relish, that (if I may dare to say so) most wicked Persons are willingly Christians, and several honest Men are counted Prophane and Indifferent: These ill Effects that arise from such a Corruption, are especially to be ascribed to Teachers. Oh! that God would be pleased to bring us back to that Simple, but Efficatious Truth, which had so great an influence upon the first Hearers of the Gospel, and inspire us with a solid Piety, and a true Christian Charity! I shall conclude with this brief, but essential Confession of my Faith, *That after the way which they call Heresy, so worship I the God of my Fathers, believing all things that are written in the Law*, and the Gospel; *and have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a Resurrection of the Dead, both of the just and unjust; and herein do I exercise my self to have always a Conscience void of Offence towards God and towards Men.*

I am Yours, &c.

F I N I S.